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SENSITIVE
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DEPARTMENT FOR H, PLEASE PASS TO CONGRESSMAN MCGOVERN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: REPRESENTATIVE MCGOVERN MEETS WITH PRESIDENT URIBE

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SUMMARY
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1. (SBU) In a March 2nd meeting with Representative James McGovern, President Uribe reviewed progress in the investigation into the high-profile killing of a victims representative in January. Uribe highlighted the importance of a transparent Justice and Peace Law Process, explaining it was crucial in ensuring victims' access to truth, justice, and reparations. He defended his strong reaction against opposition critics, but said he would exercise more restraint in the future. McGovern said he would prefer more social aid in U.S. assistance for Colombia, but stressed he did not intend to call for cuts in overall assistance levels. End Summary.

2. (SU) On March 2nd, Representative James McGovern (D-MA), Legislative Director Cindy Buhl, Program Director for the Center for International Policy Adam Issacson, Charge d'Affairs Milt Drucker, and Political Officer Kevin Murakami (notetaker) met with President Alvaro Uribe for an hour. Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Fernando Araujo, Minister of Agriculture Andres Felipe Arias, Minister of Mines Hernan Martinez, Presidential Communications Advisor Jorge Eastman, International Relations Director for Accion Social Diego Molano, MFA America Desk Officer Patricia Cortes, and Luis Araujo of the Colombian Embassy to the United States also attended.

PROGRESS IN YOLANDA IZQUIERDO'S MURDER CASE
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3. (SBU) Asked about protection of victims participating in the Justice and Peace Law (JPL) process, Uribe telephoned General Naranjo, chief of the Judicial Police (DIJIN), who explained the police had captured the material author in the murder of victims' representative Yolanda Izquierdo. Naranjo said the investigation was 80 percent complete; he expected to arrest soon the intellectual author and her intermediary. Uribe said after the killing, he had announced a 100 million peso reward and ordered the seizure of all paramilitary assets. Uribe noted he had made the decision to seize these assets two weeks before the Izquierdo murder, but Eduardo Pizarro, head of the National Reparations Commission, had advised him to postpone the action to give the ex-paramilitary chiefs the chance to surrender their assets voluntarily. Uribe reiterated his determination that the paramilitaries hand over all their assets, "voluntarily or through force."

URIBE DEFENDS DEMOBILIZATION, JUSTICE AND PEACE PROCESS

14. (SBU) Uribe said a transparent JPL process was crucial in assuring victims' access to truth, justice, and reparations. For example, Uribe wanted the voluntary confessions (version libre) of ex-para chiefs to be broadcast. "We need to know the truth," he said. Uribe said he was surprised that some of his political supporters had paramilitary links, but stressed the need for the JPL process to uncover all such relationships, regardless of office or status.

15. (SBU) Uribe said his Democratic Security Policy led to the demobilization process. GOC security forces had killed 1,700 paramilitaries since he took office; this pressure had led to the voluntary paramilitary demobilization. McGovern expressed his concern over ex-paramilitaries forming new criminal groups. Uribe reiterated the GOC's commitment to combat this problem. He estimated there were approximately 1,600 ex-paramilitaries trying to rearm, with about 50 mid-level leaders involved. In addition, Uribe said four major paramilitary chiefs were still at large. He had appointed a special task force to pursue the newly emerging groups and the fugitive para chiefs. "The army and police have their orders," Uribe said, "And that order is to arrest or kill them."

URIBE ON OPPOSITION: "I'LL TRY TO RESTRAIN MYSELF"

16. (SBU) McGovern raised complaints by human rights groups over Uribe's public criticism of human rights groups and political opposition leaders. Uribe defended his statements against some members of the Polo Democratico Alternativo (POLO), but said he would try to restrain himself in the future. He explained his remark that certain politicians had gone from being "terrorists wearing camouflage to wearing business suits" was made only after POLO opposition leader Senator Gustavo Petro had publicly accused Uribe's brother of being a paramilitary. "My critics attack me as the fascist, paramilitary president," Uribe stated, "but I cannot tolerate such unfounded attacks against my family." Uribe also noted that Petro was a member of the guerrilla group M-19, and that neither Petro nor any other M-19 member had undergone a JPL process-like confession. The JPL process was far tougher than the process through which the M-19 and the EPL had demobilized.

URIBE TOUTS ACHIEVEMENTS OF DEMOCRATIC SECURITY POLICY...

17. (SBU) Uribe said his democratic security policy benefited all Colombians. When he took office, there were 68 killings for every 100,000 persons; today, the number is down to 38. He had ordered the military and police to provide equal protection to both his supporters and opponents. Uribe emphasized his commitment to protect trade unionists, mentioning he meets with the three heads of the trade confederations on a monthly basis. He said the number of trade unionists homicides had fallen by over half since he took office. Still, Uribe lamented that the murder of a single trade unionist was one too many.

...AND PLUGS SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROGRESS

18. (SBU) Uribe touched on socio-economic programs under his government. He highlighted the recent 6.3 percent minimum wage increase - the third to take place since he took office - and noted that collective bargaining negotiations had resulted in an average 8 percent salary increase. He explained Colombia has one of the highest rates of vocational training in Latin America, and that Colombians enjoy full health coverage. He said 5 million families receive micro-credits, and beginning in August, 1.5 million families will receive a bi-monthly subsidy to assist in education costs. Uribe emphasized the importance of the FTA in

ensuring continued economic growth.

ELN PEACE PROCESS
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¶9. (SBU) Uribe said High Commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo had just returned from peace talks with the ELN in Cuba. He described Restrepo as "pessimistic" over the talks' prospects for success. Uribe said ELN members should be subject to the same standards paramilitaries were facing under the JPL process, but stated the ELN had rejected these terms as "too harsh." Uribe said Cuba had been "helpful" in facilitating the talks.

MCGOVERN AND URIBE DISCUSS U.S. ASSISTANCE
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¶10. (SBU) McGovern expressed his preference to redistribute U.S. assistance to Colombia, with less aid going to the military and more towards social initiatives. Still, he emphasized that Congressional Democrats had never discussed cutting the amount of aid for Colombia. McGovern said he opposed aerial fumigation, but doubted the Congress would end the spray program. He said the State Department should withhold human rights certification of military aid.

¶11. (U) Representative McGovern did not clear this message.
Drucker